

## **ARTICLE 25: UNIVERSITY DRIVE REZONING**

### **PLANNING BOARD MINORITY REPORT**

Our vote against recommending the rezoning of a section of University Drive from Office Park (OP) to Limited Business (BL) is based on significant concerns raised during the Planning Board public hearing describing the persistence of wetlands and drainage problems in the University Drive area. In its review of the proposed amendment, the Zoning Subcommittee considered whether the possible new uses that would become available for the parcel in question were appropriate, and we do not dispute that they would be compatible with both the existing use patterns in the area and the fundamental vision of the town's master plan. Furthermore, we would welcome both the increase in the town's tax base and the addition of affordable housing stock that have been suggested as possible results of the zoning change.

However, we believe that insufficient attention was paid to the question of how extensive the water problems in the area are and what might be the impact of building even on dry sections of the parcel. Testimony by abutters at the public hearing indicated that there is frequently standing water on the parcel to be rezoned and on adjacent parcels. According to the former town engineer, this is because the drainage system for the entire University Drive area is dysfunctional. If the zoning were changed, allowable building coverage would increase from 20% to 35% (subject to environmental regulations), or almost double what it is now, which may greatly exacerbate an already problematic situation. Before voting to allow an increase in coverage, we would like to know what percentage of the parcel is actually buildable and whether covering any of it at all would aggravate the water problems there.

We realize that wetlands protection regulations are likely to restrict the scope of any development that may be proposed for that parcel, but nevertheless we think an analysis of whether development is appropriate at all should be done before making a decision on rezoning it. Since the project that prompted the Board's interest in this amendment seems to be on the back burner, judging by the Fair Housing Partnership's withdrawal of a request for CPA funding, we believe it is not necessary to make a decision now. Instead, more time should be devoted to considering and responding to the concerns that have been raised.

Resource protection, in this case of existing wetland and de facto farmland, is an important objective of zoning. Town Meeting members must weigh protection of water resources and the property values of abutters versus development potential and benefits of BL zoning, and based on what we currently know we are not ready at this time to recommend rezoning.

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